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"I AM SET FOR THE DEFENCE OF THE GOSPEL."

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FINNEY'S LECTURES.

From the N. Y. Evangelist.

EXTRACTS FROM LECTURE VII. ON CHRISTIAN DUTY.

Text.—For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.—John xii. 43.

These words were spoken of certain individuals who refused to confess that Jesus was the Christ, because he was extremely unpopular with the scribes and pharisees, and principal people of Jerusalem.

There is a plain distinction between self-love, or the simple desire of happiness, and selfishness. Self-love, the desire of happiness and dread of misery, is constitutional; it is a part of our frame as God made us and as he intended us to be; and its indulgence, within the limits of the law of God, is not sinful. Whenever it is indulged contrary to the law of God, it becomes sinful. When the desire of happiness or the dread of misery becomes the controlling principle, and we prefer our own gratification to some other greater interest, it becomes selfishness. When to avoid pain or procure happiness, we sacrifice other greater interests, we violate the great law of disinterested benevolence. It is no longer self-love, acting within lawful bounds, but selfishness.

To-night, I design to point out the developments of that class of professing Christians, who "love the praise of men more than the praise of God."

I would not be understood to imply that a mere regard for reputation has led this class to profess religion. Religion has always been too unpopular with the great mass of mankind to render it a general thing to become professing Christians from a mere regard to reputation. But I mean, that where it is not generally unpopular to become a professor of religion, and will not diminish popularity, but will increase it with many, a complex motive operates—the hope of securing happiness in a future world, and that it may increase reputation here. And thus many are led to profess religion, when after all, on a close examination it will be seen that the leading object, which is prized beyond any thing else, is the good opinion of their fellow men. Sooner than forfeit this utterly, they would not profess religion. Their profession turns on this. And although they do profess to be sincere Christians, you may see by their conduct, on close examination, that they will do nothing that will forfeit this good opinion of men. They will not encounter the odium that they must if they were to give themselves up to root sin out of the world.

Observe, that impatient sinners are always influenced by one of two things, in all that they do that appears like religion. Either they do them out of regard to mere natural principles, as compassion or self-love—principles that are constitutional in them—or from selfishness. They are done either out of regard to their own reputation or happiness, or the gratification of some natural principle in them, that has no moral character; and not from the love of God in them. They love the praise of men more than the praise of God.

I will now mention several things by which you may detect the true character of the class of persons of whom I have been speaking; who make the praise of men their idol, notwithstanding they profess to love God supremely. And they are things by which you can detect your own true characters, if there are any present who properly belong to this class.

1. They do what the apostle Paul says certain persons did in his day, and for that reason they remained ignorant of the true doctrine; they "measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves among themselves."

There are a vast many individuals, who instead of making Jesus Christ their standard of comparison, and the Bible their rule of life, manifestly aim at no such thing. They show that they never dreamed of making the BIBLE their standard. The great question with them is, whether they do about as many things in religion, and are about as pious as other people, or as the churches around them. Their object is to maintain a respectable profession of religion. Instead of seriously inquiring for themselves, what the Bible really requires, and asking how Jesus Christ would act in such and such cases, they are looking simply at the com-

mon run of professing Christians, and are satisfied with doing what is commendable in their estimation. They prove to a demonstration, that their object is not so much to do what the Bible lays down as duty, as to do what the great mass of professing Christians do—to do what is respectable, rather than what is RIGHT.

2. This class of persons do not trouble themselves about elevating the standard of piety around them.

They are not troubled at the fact, that the general standard of piety is so low in the church, that it is impossible to bring the great mass of sinners to repentance. They think the standard at the present time is high enough. Whatever be the standard at the time, it satisfies them. While the real friends of God and man are complaining of the church, because the standard of piety is so low, and trying to wake up the church to elevate the tone of religion, it all seems to this class of persons like sensoriousness and a meddling, uneasy disposition, and as denoting a bad spirit in them. Just as when Jesus Christ denounced the scribes and pharisees and leading professors of his day, they said, "He hath a devil." Why, he is denouncing our doctors of divinity, and all our best men, and even dares to call the scribes and pharisees hypocrites, and he tells us that except our righteousness shall exceed theirs, we can in no case enter the kingdom of heaven. What a bad spirit he has!

A large part of the church at the present day have the same spirit, and every effort to open the eyes of the church, and to make Christians see that they live so low, so worldly, so much like hypocrites, that it is impossible that the work of the Lord should go on, only excites ill will and occasions reproach. "O," they say, "what a bad spirit he shows, so sensorious, and so unkind, surely that is any thing but the meek, and kind, and loving spirit of the Son of God!" They forget how Jesus Christ poured out his anathemas, enough to make the hills of Judea shake, against those that had the reputation of being the most pious people in that day. Just as if Jesus Christ never said any thing as severe to any body, but just fawned over them, and soothed them into his kingdom. Who does not know that it was the hypocritical spirit exhibited by professors of religion, that roused his soul and moved his indignation, and called forth his burning torrents of denunciation. He was always complaining of the very people who were set up as patterns of piety, and called them hypocrites, and thundered over their heads the terrible words, "How CAN YE ESCAPE THE DAMNATION OF HELL!"

It is not wonderful, when so many love the praise of men more than the praise of God, that there should be excitement when the truth is told. They are very well satisfied with the standard of piety as it is, and think that while the people are doing so much for Sabbath schools and missions, and tracts, that is doing pretty well, and they wonder what the man would have. Alas! alas! for their blindness! They do not seem to know that with all this, the lives of the generality of professing Christians are almost as different from the standard of Jesus Christ as light is from darkness.

3. They make a distinction between those requirements of God that are strongly enforced by public sentiment and those that are not thus guarded.

They are very scrupulous in observing such requirements as public sentiment distinctly favors, while they easily set at naught those which public sentiment does not enforce. You have illustrations, of this on every side. I might mention the Temperance Reformation. How many there are who yield to public sentiment in this matter what they never would yield to God or man. At first they waited to see how it would turn. They resisted giving up of ardent spirits. But when that became popular, and they found that they could do very well with other alcoholic stimulants, they gave it up. But they are determined to yield no further than public sentiment drives them. They show that it is not their object, in joining the Temperance Society, to CARRY OUT the reform, so as to slay the monster, Intemperance, but their object is to maintain a good character. They love the praise of men more than the praise of God.

All those sins that are reprobated by public opinion this class of persons abstain from, but they do other things just as bad which are not thus frowned on. They do those duties which are enforced by public opinion, but not those that are less enforced. They will not stay away from public worship on the Sabbath, because they could not maintain any reputation for religion at all if they did. But they neglect things that are just as peremptorily enjoined in the word of God. Where an individual habitually disobeys any command of God, he knowing it to be such, it is just as certain as his soul lives, that the obedience he appears to render, is not from a regard to God's authority, or love to God, but from other motives.

He does not, in fact, obey any command of God. Obedience to God's commands implies a state of the heart, and therefore nothing is obedience that does not imply a supreme regard to the authority of God. Now, if man's heart is right, then whatever God enjoins he regards as of more

importance than any thing else. And if a man regards any thing else of superior weight to God's authority, that is his idol. Whatever we supremely regard, that is our God—whether it be reputation, or comfort, or riches, or honor, or whatever it is that we regard supremely, that is the God of our hearts. Whatever a man's reason is for habitually neglecting any thing he knows to be the command of God, or that he sees to be required to promote the kingdom of Christ, there is demonstration absolute that he regards that as supreme. There is nothing acceptable to God in any of his services. Rest assured, all his religion is the religion of public sentiment. If he neglects any thing required by the law of God, because he can pass along in neglect and public sentiment does not enjoin it, or if he does other things inconsistent with the law of God, merely because public opinion does require it, it is a simple matter of fact, that it is public sentiment to which he yields obedience, in all his conduct, and not a regard to the glory of God.

How is it with you, beloved? Do you habitually neglect any requirement of God, because it is not sustained and enforced by public sentiment? If you are a professor of religion, it is to be presumed you do not neglect any requirement that is strongly urged by public sentiment. But how is it with others? Do you not habitually neglect some duties? Do you not live in some practices reputable among men, that you know to be contrary to the law of God? If you do, it is demonstration absolute that you regard the opinions of men more than the judgment of God. Write down your name HYPOCRITE.

4. This class of professors are apt to indulge in some sins when they are away from home, that they would not commit at home.

Many a man who is temperate at home, when he gets to a distance will toss off his brandy and water at the table, or step up to the bar of a steamboat and call for liquor without shame, or if they are in Europe, they will go to the theatre. When I was in the Mediterranean, at Messina, a gentleman one day asked me if I would go to the theatre with him. "What! I go to the theatre? A minister go to the theatre?" Why, said he, you are away from home, and no one would know it. "But would not God know it?" It was plain that he thought, although I was a minister, I could go to the theatre when I was away from home. No matter if God knew it, so long as men did not know it. And how should he get that idea, but by seeing ministers who would do just such things?

5. Another development of the character of these individuals is, that they indulge themselves in secret sin.

I am now speaking of something, by which you may know your selves. If you allow yourselves in any sin secretly, when you can get along without having any human being know it, know that God sees it, and that he has already written down your name, HYPOCRITE. You are more afraid of disgrace in the eye of mortals than of disgrace in the eye of God. If you loved God supremely, it would be a small thing to you that any and every body else knew your sins, in comparison with having them known to God. If tempted to any such thing, you would exclaim, "What! shall I commit sin in the eye of God?"

6. They indulge in secret omissions of duty, which they would not dare to have known to others.

They may not practice any secret sins, or indulge in those secret pollutions that are spoken of, but they neglect those duties, that if they were known to neglect, it would be called disreputable to their Christian character. Such as secret prayer, for instance. They will go to the communion—yes, to the communion!—and appear to be very pious on the Sabbath, and yet, as to private piety, they know nothing of it. Their closet for prayer is unknown to God or man. It is easy to see that reputation is their idol. They dread to lose their reputation more than to offend God.

How is it with you? Is it a fact, that you habitually omit those secret duties, and are more careful to perform your public duties than private ones? Then what is your character? Do you need to be told? They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

7. The conscience of this class of persons seems to be formed on other principles than those of the gospel.

They seem to have a conscience in those things that are popular, and no conscience at all on those things that are not required by public sentiment. You may preach to them ever so plainly, their duty, and prove it ever so clearly, and even make them confess that it is their duty, and yet so long as public sentiment does not require it, and it is not a matter of reputation, they will continue on in the same way as before. Show them a "Thus saith the Lord," and make them see that their course is palpably inconsistent with Christian perfection, and contrary to the interests of the kingdom of Christ, and yet they will not alter. They make it manifest that it is not the requirement of God they regard, but the requirement of public opinion.

8. This class of persons generally dread, very much, the thought of being

They are ignorant, practically, of a first principle in religion, that ALL THE WORLD IS WRONG! That the public sentiment of the world is all against God, and that every one who intends to serve God must in the first instance set his face against the public sentiment of the world. They are to take it for granted, that in a world of rebels, public sentiment is as certainly wrong as that there is a controversy with God. They have never had their eyes open to this fundamental truth, that the world is wrong, and that God's ways are directly over against their ways. Consequently it is true, and always has been true, that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." They shall be called fanatical, superstitious, ultras, and the like. They always have been, and they always will be, as long as the world is wrong.

But this class of persons will never go further than is consistent with the opinions of worldly men. They say they must do this and that in order to have influence over such men. Right over against this is the course of the true friends of God and man. Their leading aim is to reverse the order of the world, and turn the world upside down, to bring all men to obey God, and all the opinions of men to conform to the word of God, and all the usages and institutions of the world to accord with the spirit of the gospel.

9. They are very intent on making friends on both sides.

They take the middle course always. They avoid the reputation of being righteous over-much, on the one hand, and on the other hand, of being lax or irreligious. It has been so for centuries, that a person could maintain a reputable profession of religion, without ever being called fanatical. And the standard is still so low, that probably the great mass of the Protestant churches are trying to occupy this middle ground. They mean to have friends on both sides. They are not set down as reprobates, on the one hand, nor as fanatics or bigots on the other. They are FASHIONABLE CHRISTIANS!

They may be called fashionable Christians for two reasons. One is, that their style of religion is popular and fashionable; and the other is, that they generally follow the world's fashions. Their sole aim in religion is not to do any thing that will disgust the world. No matter what God requires, they are determined to be so prudent as not to bring on them the censures of the world, nor offend the enemies of God. They have manifestly more regard to men than God. And if they are ever so circumstanced that they must do that which will displease their friends and neighbors, or offend God, they will offend God. If public sentiment clashes with the commands of God, they will yield to public sentiment.

Remainder next week.

A SOLEMN APPEAL

IN FAVOR OF THE CAUSE OF PEACE.

SEC. 14. Christians ought to labor and pray for the abolition of war, because God has chosen them to be the instruments of accomplishing his gracious purposes.

Christians are the salt of the earth. If the salt hath lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? Are they to look to the world for an example? Are they to expect the world to go ahead of them in accomplishing the will of God? They are the light of the world. If that light shall be obscured or put out, are they to borrow light from morality, philanthropy, or other unbaptized virtues? No, it is in vain to expect it. An extinguished sun might as well be lighted by a taper. Let us pray, that the cloud of prejudice on the subject of war may be removed, and the church shine in all her original splendor, when no one was justified in rendering evil for evil—when the church preached and practised the duty of loving enemies and overcoming evil with good.

I have endeavored to produce a few reasons why professing Christians, and all who profess to be governed by Christian principles, should put their shoulders to the wheel and call on God for help. More might have been said, but if the motives I have laid before my readers have no effect, and Christians will continue to fold their arms in listless apathy, and neglect the imperative duty of exerting themselves in this holy cause, I, at least, have, in some measure, cleared the skirts of my garments from the blood of souls, and pray God not to lay this sin to their charge.

But if any should ask, what are Christians to do? I answer, just the same that they would do for the conversion of the heathen. Let every minister of the gospel labor to undeceive his people as to the true nature of war, and show its absolute inconsistency with the religion of Christ. We have no need to send peace missionaries ten thousand miles. Their work is nearer home. Christian nations must first be converted from this sin. All its abominations should be clearly pointed out; the white sepulchre should be laid open; and the exceeding sinfulness of war should be clearly brought to light. Next, let the churches unite in humble and hearty prayer to Almighty God, that he would remember his promise and "do as he has said." Let them pray, and pray fervently, that wars may cease to the ends of the earth.

The day for an annual concert of prayer recommended by the American Peace

Society, is the 25th of December, or some convenient day near it, not from any idea of the peculiar sanctity of that day, but the associations connected with it, by Christians generally, are favorable to the object. Now, suppose that a majority of the churches in the United States should agree in observing some part of that day, perhaps the evening, with a concert of prayer for God's blessing on the cause of peace, might we not expect that the churches of England—where the peace cause has many more efficient friends than it has in this country—would imitate our example, as they have in the temperance cause? I think, from what I heard from one of the late delegation from the congregational union of England, that the churches in that country would join us. He was delighted to hear that something was doing in this country in the cause of peace, and told me that the congregational churches in England were just awakening to the subject. If the churches generally in G. Britain and the United States should engage in this concert, would it be possible for the rulers of either country to declare war against the other? When this concert of prayer has been established in the United States and Great Britain, it is reasonable to expect that the evangelical churches on the continent of Europe will join in it, and indeed all over the world, Christians of every sect would be praying for deliverance from the scourge of war.

Who, that has any faith in the efficacy of prayer, can doubt for a moment that these prayers would be answered, not only because God has promised to answer prayer, but the very fact, that Christians everywhere were generally engaged in a concert of prayer for the abolition of war, would cast such a damp on the spirit of war as would extinguish it. Christian rulers would not dare to declare war, when they saw the best part of their subjects engaged in prayer against it. War would begin to be considered as a sin—a relic of barbarism, and would be abandoned by all Christian and civilized people.

I do not deny, that disputes may still be likely to arise among commercial Christians, nations; but war never was, and never will be necessary to settle them, any more than boxing and duelling are necessary to settle disputes between individuals. A love of glory has been the chief cause of war; and revenge and retaliation have been the justifying principles by which wars have been defended. As soon as nations give up the love of glory and of revenge, they can as easily find some peaceable method of settling their difficulties, as professors of religion find some way to settle difficulties in the church, without resorting to personal violence. Arbitration, or a congress of nations, might take the place of war, and Christians would wonder that they had ever countenanced the diabolical custom. Let Christians inculcate the principles of peace, and labor and pray for the abolition of war, and they may safely leave it to the men of the world to find some way to settle national difficulties. I am no advocate for an union of church and state. Let Christians, as Christians, show the sin and wickedness of war; and when rulers find some proper substitute for it, let them help it by their prayers and by their influence.

The effect of the abolition of war would be great and glorious; virtue would flourish; learning and religion would go hand in hand; the chain of the slave would be broken; intemperance would hide her blushing head; the Sabbath would be observed; moral reform would advance; swearing and duelling would go out of fashion; and theft, robbery, and murder would seldom be heard of. The mouths of infidels would be stopped, for the prophecies would be fulfilled and the precepts of Christ would universally prevail. The truth of the Christian religion would be universally acknowledged, and every one would be anxious to spread its benign influence all over the world. All objections of the Jews against the Christian religion, drawn from the belligerent character of professing Christians, would be removed. They would see that the Prince of Peace has already appeared in the world, and it is in vain for them to look for another. Mahomedans would admire the wondrous change and open their hearts to receive the gospel, and heathens would send to us for missionaries and the Bible. And when the vast expenses of war should be turned into the treasury of the Lord, missionaries and Bibles could be easily furnished for the whole world.

But how is this great change to be effected? The means are simple—as simple as those of the temperance cause. It is so simple, that it is difficult to make men believe that so great a cure can be performed by so simple means. They are like the Syrian general, who could not believe that bare obedience to the direction of the prophet, "wash and be clean," could cure his leprosy. He looked for some great thing. Let every Christian wash in the fountain of peace, and the leprosy of war would soon leave the world. It is only necessary that those Christians who believe war to be a heaven-daring, soul-destroying sin, and that God is able and willing to perform his promise when his children shall require it of him, to pray for its abolition, and to send publications, tracts, and agents, to lay these views before their sister churches all over the world, and the work would speedily be accomplished.

But how are these tracts to be distributed, and these messengers to be sent?—Just in the same way as other religious tracts are now distributed and messengers are sent—by the alms and contributions of Christians. Let every church that observes the peace-prayer-meeting take up a contribution for that purpose. The peace cause asks but little; and because it asks but little, that little is refused. Did Christians contribute but barely each one cent a year, the cause would be supported. If it had but one stationary agent, to publish an able periodical, distribute tracts, and act as corresponding secretary, and one travelling agent, that would be enough for the present. But, alas, such is the apathy and want of faith in Christians, that they fear to venture even their cents in this cause, and many of those who give their prayers grudge their farthings! Hitherto the expense has been borne by a few individuals, and a great proportion of them have become weary in well doing, for the coldness and indifference of the church has damped their ardor, and they have given up the cause in despair. A few still cling to the wreck in hopes of aid, and I think they will not be wholly disappointed. The year before last, we had three prayer meetings, two in Maine and one in N. Hampshire. Last year the prayer meetings were pretty generally observed in Maine, though but few churches gave us any substantial evidence of their meeting. There were twenty-three contributions—twelve in Maine, two in New Hampshire, seven in Massachusetts, one in Rhode Island and one in New York. The increase was seven fold in one year. There is reason to hope that the increase this year will be in the same ratio. If this should generally be the case for a few years, the cause of peace will be second to none of the benevolent operations of the day, and the present generation will see a wonderful change in the world.

In the first origin of the Peace Society, it leaned mainly on philanthropy, worldly prudence and common sense. But these had not strength enough to support it. They made our expectations vain and disappointed our trust. We turn from the world to the church of Christ, the Prince of Peace. Other benevolent causes, such as temperance and anti-slavery, may be carried on, in a great degree, by the influence of philanthropy; but the cause of Peace requires higher motives, more self-denial, and more moral courage, than philanthropy affords. God will honor his Church, by making it the instrument of abolishing war. He will not give that glory to the world.

More than two hundred and fifty ministers are now pledged to preach annually on the subject of peace and war. Several of the great ecclesiastical bodies in New England have recommended that an annual concert of prayer for the success of the peace cause, should be observed on the 25th of December. Will their recommendations be unavailing? Do Christians believe that the soul is immortal? Do they believe that a vast majority of those who perish in battle go down to endless perdition? Do they believe that war is the mother of all abominations, and the greatest obstacle to the spread of vital piety, both at home and abroad? and will they refuse to offer a prayer or a cent for its abolition? I will not believe it. As long as God shall give me strength I will not cease to call upon them. I have in these remarks touched upon but a few of the motives which should induce a Christian to labor and pray for the abolition of war. If what I have said does not move them, I will not despair of God's promise, but at some future time, will try other motives.

PHILANTHROPOS.

RESURRECTION OF THE BODY.

Dense as the gloom is which hangs over the mouth of the sepulchre, it is the spot, above all others, where the gospel, if it enters, shines and triumphs. In the busy sphere of life and health, it encounters an active antagonist; the world confronts it, aims to obscure its glories, to deny its claims, to drown its voice, to dispute its progress, to drive it from the ground it occupies. But from the mouth of the grave the world retires; it shrinks from the contest there; it leaves a clear and open space in which the gospel can assert its claims, and unveil its glories without opposition or fear. There the infidel and the worldling look anxiously around, but the world has left them helpless and fled. There the Christian looks around, and lo! the angel of mercy is standing close by his side. The gospel kindles a torch, which not only irradiates the valley of the shadow of death, but throws a radiance into the world beyond, and reveals it peopled with the sainted spirits of those who have died in Jesus. It descends with us into the low chambers of the grave; bids us look on its silent inmates; and to look on them with the persuasion that they only sleep. It assures us that death, like sleep, is not the destruction of the living principle, but only a temporary change in the mode of its operation; that, like sleep, it is a state of rest, discharging us from all the concerns of the world; that, like sleep, it principally affects the body, the activity of the soul being meantime continued, and perhaps greatly increased; and, most of all, that, like sleep, it will not be perpetual, but only endure for a night. It tells us that a day will dawn on the world, when Jesus, assuming an aspect of infinite be-